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# Positive Parenting





## **Positive Parenting (What's Included)**

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## What is Positive Parenting?

Positive parenting is an approach centered around fostering a strong, healthy relationship between parents and children. It emphasizes respect, empathy, and guidance rather than punishment. The goal is to help children develop self-discipline, responsibility, and problem-solving skills through positive reinforcement and clear, consistent boundaries.

Positive parenting emphasizes nurturing and supportive approaches to child-rearing. Here are five key aspects:

- **Unconditional Love and Support:** Providing a consistent, loving environment where children feel accepted and valued regardless of their behavior.
- **Clear and Consistent Boundaries:** Setting clear rules and expectations that are age-appropriate, and consistently enforcing them with fairness and understanding.
- **Effective Communication:** Encouraging open communication, active listening, and respectful dialogue between parents and children to build trust and understanding.
- **Positive Discipline:** Using discipline strategies that teach children about consequences, problem-solving, and responsibility, without resorting to punitive measures or physical punishment.
- **Promoting Independence and Autonomy:** Encouraging children to develop skills, make choices, and solve problems on their own, while providing guidance and support when needed.

# Matrix of Parenting Styles

The University of Oregon study on 10,000 families found that parenting styles significantly impact children's behavioral and learning outcomes. **The four parenting styles analyzed were authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved**, categorized along dimensions of firmness and warmth.

Authoritative parenting (firm and loving) yielded the best outcomes, fostering well-adjusted children with better behavioral and academic performance. Authoritarian parenting (firm but hostile) resulted in obedience but higher anxiety and lower self-esteem. Permissive parenting (loving but permissive) led to behavioral issues and lower academic performance. Uninvolved parenting (permissive and hostile) was associated with the worst outcomes, including academic and behavioral problems

## Ranking of Parenting Styles (from Best to Worst):

- **Authoritative (firm and loving):** Promotes well-adjusted, confident children with good behavioral and academic outcomes.
- **Authoritarian (firm and hostile):** Ensures obedience but can lead to anxiety, lower self-esteem, and poorer social skills.
- **Permissive (loving and permissive):** Results in behavioral issues, lack of discipline, and lower academic performance due to a lack of boundaries.
- **Uninvolved (permissive and hostile):** Associated with the worst outcomes, including neglect, poor academic performance, and behavioral problems.

These findings emphasize the importance of a balanced approach combining firmness with warmth to foster children's healthy development.



# Discipline VS Punishment



This chart illustrates the difference between discipline, which focuses on teaching and nurturing through methods like logical consequences and positive reinforcement, and punishment, which can involve punitive measures like spanking or verbal shaming with little to no support for children on how to approach and navigate challenges and expectations in the desired and appropriate way. Positive parenting aims to foster a supportive environment where children learn from their actions and build healthy relationships with their parents.

Discipline	Punishment
<b>Time-In:</b> Spending quality time with a child to discuss their behavior and emotions, promoting understanding, connection, and alternative approaches.	<b>Time-Out:</b> Using isolation as a consequence by placing a child in a timeout area for a specific duration.
<b>Logical Consequences:</b> Allowing a child to experience natural consequences related to their actions (e.g., not having as much time at the playground because it took a long time to clean-up their toys).	<b>Taking Away Privileges:</b> Removing privileges (e.g., screen time, dessert, etc.) temporarily as a consequence of "misbehavior."
<b>Positive Reinforcement:</b> Rewarding good behavior to encourage its repetition (e.g., praising a child for sharing toys).	<b>Verbal Shaming:</b> Using harsh language or criticism to belittle or embarrass a child for their behavior.
<b>Setting Limits:</b> Establishing clear rules and boundaries with explanations about why certain behaviors are not acceptable.	<b>Withholding Affection:</b> Denying love or affection as a punishment, which can create emotional distress.
<b>Problem-Solving Discussions:</b> Engaging in calm discussions to understand the reasons behind a child's behavior and finding constructive solutions together.	<b>Harsh Expectations:</b> Expecting your child to automatically know or behave in a way you want them too, even if it hasn't been learned or developmentally achieved yet, leading to disconnect and shame (in child).

# Misconceptions About Positive Parenting

## Permissive Parenting Confusion:

- **Misconception:** Positive parenting is often mistaken for permissive parenting, where rules are few and consequences are minimal.
- **Clarification:** Positive parenting involves setting clear expectations and boundaries in a supportive and empathetic manner. It emphasizes mutual respect and understanding, rather than simply letting children do as they please.
- **Example:** A parent practicing positive parenting sets rules for screen time but explains the reasons behind them. They enforce limits consistently and engage in discussions about responsible technology use.
- **Contrast with Permissive Parenting:** In permissive parenting, there may be a lack of structure and rules, with little guidance on behavior. Children might have unrestricted access to screens without discussion or limits.



## Overemphasis on Praise

- **Misconception:** There's a belief that positive parenting involves constant praise for every action, regardless of effort or behavior.
- **Clarification:** Positive parenting encourages acknowledging and reinforcing effort, progress, and positive behavior with specific praise that highlights the process rather than the outcome alone.
- **Example:** Instead of saying "Good job!" indiscriminately and excessively, a parent using positive parenting might say, "I noticed how you shared your toys with your sister. That was kind of you."
- **Contrast with Authoritarian Parenting:** In authoritarian parenting, praise might be scarce or conditional. Children may only receive acknowledgment when they achieve high standards set by the parent, rather than for effort or improvement.



## Ignoring Misbehavior

- **Misconception:** Some think positive parenting means turning a blind eye to misbehavior to avoid conflict or upsetting the child.
- **Clarification:** Positive parenting addresses misbehavior calmly and constructively. It involves teaching children appropriate behavior through guidance and correction without resorting to harsh punishments.
- **Example:** When a child hits another child, a positive parenting approach would involve explaining why hitting is not okay, helping the child understand emotions, and teaching alternative ways to resolve conflicts.
- **Contrast with Authoritarian Parenting:** An authoritarian parent might react to hitting by immediately shaming and/or punishing the child without explaining why hitting is wrong or offering guidance on managing emotions and reactions.

## Parent-Child Friendship

- **Misconception:** Positive parenting is sometimes viewed as prioritizing being friends with children over being authoritative.
- **Clarification:** Positive parenting balances warmth and connection with clear expectations and guidance. It involves nurturing a strong bond while maintaining a role as a supportive authority figure.
- **Example:** While enjoying playtime together, a parent practicing positive parenting still enforces bedtime routines consistently and helps the child understand why sleep is important for their health.
- **Contrast with Permissive Parenting:** A permissive parent may prioritize being liked by their child over enforcing rules or may avoid setting limits altogether to maintain a friendly relationship.

## Time-Consuming Approach

- **Misconception:** There's a belief that positive parenting requires excessive time and effort, making it impractical for busy families.
- **Clarification:** Positive parenting principles can be integrated into everyday interactions and routines. It emphasizes consistency and communication, which can ultimately save time by preventing conflicts and fostering cooperative behavior.
- **Example:** Instead of reacting to every minor issue, using positive parenting will proactively establish reliable routines and expectations, in which children feel a greater sense of predictability and safety knowing their parents provide and enforce boundaries.
- **Contrast with Authoritarian Parenting:** An authoritarian parent may focus on immediate obedience and punishment, which can lead to frequent power struggles and ultimately consume more time and energy.
- **Contrast with Permissive Parenting:** Not providing children with boundaries will result in them "pushing the boundaries" to subconsciously achieve them. This may lead to your child running around and away from you when it's time to leave, contributing to more time lost compared to stating it's time to go (and why), while ensure the transition happens when you say it will.



# Navigating (Common & Typical) Developmental Challenges with Positive Parenting (Ages 0-6)

Understanding your child's developmental stages can help you navigate challenges positively. Here's a detailed guide to common challenges and how to support your child:



## Infancy (0-1 Year)

- **Mouthing Objects:** Infants explore the world through mouthing objects, which can lead to safety concerns such as choking hazards. Provide safe, age-appropriate toys that are large enough to prevent choking, while modeling different ways to investigate materials. This encourages exploration while ensuring their safety.
  - **Do not** provide small objects or toys that can be choking hazards or yell at your baby. Ensure all toys are age-appropriate and safe for mouthing.
- **Frequent Waking:** Babies may wake frequently at night, disrupting sleep for parents. Create a soothing bedtime routine involving activities like a warm bath, gentle rocking, or soft music to signal it's time to sleep. Respond promptly to their nighttime needs with calm reassurance and minimal stimulation to help them settle back to sleep.
  - **Do not** ignore your baby's nighttime needs or let them "cry it out." Respond with gentle reassurance and comfort to help them feel safe & secure to fall back asleep.
- **Separation Anxiety:** Around 6-8 months, babies may experience separation anxiety when separated from caregivers. Establish predictable routines and brief separations to help them feel secure. Use comforting rituals like a special blanket or toy to ease transitions. Offer reassurance with comforting words and physical touch to build trust and reduce anxiety.
  - **Do not** abruptly leave without establishing a goodbye routine. Offer predictable transitions and comforting rituals to ease separations.



## Toddler (1-3 Years)

- **Temper Tantrums:** Toddlers may express frustration through tantrums when they can't express themselves verbally. Stay calm and acknowledge their feelings while setting clear limits on unacceptable behavior. After the tantrum discuss alternatives and/or offer (appropriate) choices within limits to give them a sense of control.
  - **Do not** react with anger or punishment during tantrums. Stay calm and present, providing clear, firm limits while acknowledging their emotions.
- **Exploratory Behavior/"Mess Making":** Toddlers are curious and may get into everything, posing safety risks and creating undesirable messes. Childproof your home by securing cabinets, covering electrical outlets, and removing hazardous items. Create safe exploration opportunities with age-appropriate toys and activities that encourage curiosity and learning.
  - **Do not** leave hazardous items within reach or neglect to childproof your home. Create safe exploration opportunities and understand that mess-making is part of your child's learning journey. It is not their plan to frustrate you, but rather, think of toddlers as little scientists constantly experimenting with the world around them.
- **Hitting:** Toddlers may hit out of frustration or to express emotions. Address hitting calmly but firmly, explaining that hitting hurts others and is not acceptable. Teach alternative ways to express feelings, such as using words (do not say "use your words" but rather, provide the specific language they can use for the corresponding challenge) or gentle touches. Model gentle behavior and provide positive reinforcement when they handle frustrations appropriately.
  - **Do not** react with physical punishment or harsh words when your child hits. Address calmly and teach alternative ways to express feelings.



## Preschooler (3-6 Years)

- **Social Conflicts:** Preschoolers may struggle with sharing toys and conflicts with peers. Teach problem-solving skills by modeling positive conflict resolution and empathy, while honoring autonomy and personal preferences. Encourage turn-taking (instead of forced sharing) and offer praise for positive interactions and guide them in expressing their feelings and negotiating solutions calmly.
  - **Do not** shame, compare, guilt, or force children to share or play together. Teach problem-solving skills, patience, and encourage empathy in resolving disputes.
- **Independence Struggles:** Preschoolers want to do things on their own but may struggle with tasks like getting dressed or tying shoes. Offer choices within limits to foster independence and decision-making skills. Break tasks into smaller steps and provide simple, clear instructions to help them succeed. Praise their efforts and celebrate small achievements to build confidence and motivation.
  - **Do not** overload with lengthy tasks or expect prolonged focus. Engage in activities suited to their attention span and gradually increase complexity. Give children time to work at hard things (instead of just doing it for them) to build confidence.
- **Cleaning-up:** Preschoolers may resist cleaning up after themselves. Make cleanup fun by turning it into a game or singing a cleanup song together. Break tasks into smaller, manageable steps and offer specific praise for their efforts. Set clear expectations and routines for tidying up toys and belongings to instill responsibility.
  - **Do not** criticize, shame, or take privileges away from your child for not cleaning up perfectly or refusing to help. Encourage and praise effort while setting consistent expectations.

# Our Top 10 Quick Tips & Takeaways

- **Be Kind and Firm:** Maintain boundaries and expectations while showing empathy and understanding, creating a nurturing environment.
- **Regulate Emotions First:** Model emotional regulation to teach children how to manage their feelings effectively - we go first!
- **Get Curious, Not Furious:** Approach conflicts with curiosity to understand your child's perspective and address underlying needs.
- **Drop the "Don't," Adopt the "Do":** Frame instructions positively to focus on desired behaviors rather than restrictions. Think "when you..., you can..."
- **Connect Before You Correct:** Build a strong connection with your child before addressing behaviors, ensuring they feel supported.
- **Encourage Autonomy:** Allow children to make age-appropriate choices to foster independence and self-confidence.
- **Support, Don't Solve:** Empathize and relate to your child, rather than immediately solving their problems for them, encouraging problem-solving skills and confidence. E.g. if your child says "I can't do this puzzle!" Instead of "Here let me help find the piece for you, state" Puzzles can be really tricky for me too." Let them process the feelings and come back to it and work on it when they're ready. You may even demonstrate a challenge with the puzzle too, which may encourage your child to help you."
- **Use Positive Reinforcement:** Acknowledge and praise good behavior to reinforce positive actions and motivations (praise the process, e.g. "you worked hard!" instead of outcome, e.g. "good job!").
- **Sandwich Boundaries With Positives:** This approach maintains positivity while setting clear expectations. E.g. "you really want to jump (validation), but we can't jump on the couch as it's not designed to be jumped on (boundary). Let's head outside where you'll have space to jump safely (alternative)."
- **Model Respectful Communication:** Demonstrate respectful communication with your child to teach them effective interpersonal skills.





**MADE FOR CHILDREN. DESIGNED FOR YOU.**

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